

THE SUBSTANCE OF A  
S E R M O N

Preached August the 26th, 1787,

A T

The Chapel in Tottenham-court-road,

A N D

The Tabernacle near Moorfields,

ON THE DEATH OF THE

Rev. HENRY PECKWELL, D. D.

Late Rector of *Bloxham cum Digby, Lincolnshire*; and  
Chaplain to the Most Honorable the Marchioness  
Dowager of Lothian.

Who departed this Life *August* the 18th, 1787,  
Aged 40 Years.

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By J. G R O V E.

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*Our friend Lazarus sleepeth.*—John xi. 11.

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Published at the Request of the Congregations, for the  
Benefit of the Charity called *The Sick Man's Friend*.

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L O N D O N :

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M.DCC.LXXXVII.

THE RESISTANCE OF A  
S. R. M. O. N.

The Council in London  
The President of the Museum

ON THE 10th OF THE MONTH  
MR. HENRY PROCKWELL, D.D.



Who donated the collection of the  
British Museum

BY J. CROVELL  
OF THE BRITISH MUSEUM

Published by the Council of the British Museum  
in the year 1851

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THE SUBSTANCE OF A  
S E R M O N, &c.

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—*I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died, and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus, will God bring with him.*—1 Thess. iv. 13, 14.

**B**EING, by a very unexpected providence, called to pay a token of respect to the memory of a departed Friend and Brother, I would direct your attention to these words.

In the preceding verses the apostle has been commending the church at Thessalonica for that love they manifested towards each other. Verse 9, As touching brotherly love, says he, ye need not that I write unto you; for ye yourselves are taught of God to love one another. For this their fame had gone abroad throughout all the churches of Macedonia. But still he beseeches them to increase therein more and more. Love is the bond of union between God's people. The new com-

mandment our Lord gave his disciples was,  
<sup>a</sup>That they should love one another. Behold  
 how good and pleasant a thing it is for bre-  
 thren to dwell together in unity. In this re-  
 lation the apostle considers himself as standing  
 to this people; and therefore, addresses them  
 as his brethren. <sup>b</sup>Our Lord himself was not  
 ashamed to call his disciples brethren. And  
 therefore says, <sup>c</sup>I ascend unto my Father and  
 your Father, and to my God and your God.  
 As little children they are exhorted to love  
 one another; and not in word only, but in-  
 deed, and in truth. Those who love the  
 Lord Jesus, will love his people for his sake;  
 and being of one spirit and one mind they  
 will strive together for the faith of the gospel.  
 But the more closely they are united in heart  
 and affection, the more painful must a sepa-  
 ration be. To fortify their minds against such  
 a trial, was the design of the apostle in the  
 words of the text.

“ I would not have you to be ignorant  
 brethren,” &c.

There are many things about which men  
 may be ignorant, and sustain no loss; but  
 this subject is of the greatest importance  
 for every one to be well acquainted with;  
 as it respects the happiness of the present  
 life, as well as that which is to come. These

words

<sup>a</sup> John xiii. 34.

<sup>b</sup> Heb. ii. 11.

<sup>c</sup> John xx. 17.



words are very applicable on the present solemn occasion.

This is a day of mourning and distress; your feelings are painful, and your fears run high. A great man is fallen in our Israel.

The poor have lost a kind benefactor who laid himself out to serve them. The church of God has lost a laborious, and disinterested minister. Many, who have been called under his preaching to the knowledge of the truth, have to cry out, my father! my father! Others bewail the loss of their spiritual guide, who led them in the way of truth and righteousness. Some have lost a steady, faithful friend; and in this calamity I bear a part, after an intimacy of seventeen years. His family, in particular, are bereaved of a kind husband, and an indulgent father. But our loss is his eternal gain. We sorrow not concerning the deceased, even as others who have no hope; for them which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him.

From these words, first, we observe that the doctrine of the death and resurrection of Christ is a sure foundation of hope for a sinner's acceptance with God.

Jesus Christ hath abolished death, and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel. Therein is the salvation of God clearly revealed. By one man sin entered  
into

into the world, and death by sin, and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned. There is none righteous, no not one. Without exception we are all involved in this common ruin; for we were shapen in iniquity, and in sin did our mother conceive us. In our earliest days we gave the fullest proof of our apostacy from God; and as we advanced in life, like sheep we went astray, and turned every one to his own way; we rebelled against the Most High, and set the Almighty at defiance. By sin we destroyed ourselves; and are justly condemned by the law of God, which extends to every thought of the heart, and admits of no deviation from perfection.

Nor was it possible for us to recover ourselves from the ruins of the fall. Can the Ethiopian change his skin? or the leopard his spots? then may ye also do good, who are accustomed to do evil. Can a man dead in trespasses and sins offer any acceptable sacrifice to God? The sacrifices of the wicked are an abomination to the Lord. But when we were in the most abject and wretched circumstances, outcasts from God, and ready to perish, he had compassion on us and found out a ransom.

In the everlasting covenant Jesus became the sinners *surety*, and the Lord laid on him the

the iniquity of us all. He who knew no sin was made sin for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him. Thus, bearing the sins of his people, it pleased the Lord to bruise him; he hath put him to grief. Without shedding of blood there could be no remission; nor could the blood of bulls or goats sanctify the unclean. But Jesus by his *own* blood hath obtained eternal redemption for us. Once in the end of the world he appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself. So that there remains no more, there *needs* no more sacrifice for sin. He has made peace through the blood of his cross. Nor had he any coadjutor in this important work, but trod the wine press alone, and of the people there was none with him. His own arm brought salvation. Through death he destroyed him that had the power of death, that is the devil.

As he was delivered for our offences, so also was he raised again for our justification. Having magnified the law and made it honourable, and thereby fully satisfied all the demands of divine justice, it was impossible he should be holden of death, or that this holy one should see corruption. Every precaution was taken to prevent his rising from the dead. The stone was sealed, and a watch set at the entrance of the sepulchre. His  
enemies



enemies triumphed; his followers trembled. This was the hour of his humiliation, and abasement. He made his grave with the wicked. But, to the eternal confusion of his enemies, and the everlasting joy of his people, on the third, the appointed day, he rose again, according to the scriptures. He spoiled principalities and powers, and made a shew of them openly. He proved himself superior to all his enemies, and when he ascended on high he led captivity captive. Thus did the Lord of Hosts triumph gloriously. Having finished the work of man's salvation, the everlasting doors were thrown open to receive this King of Glory.

Now he sits upon his throne, and must reign till the last enemy shall be destroyed; and all his redeemed come with singing to Zion, and everlasting joy upon their heads. Such good news does the gospel bring to sinners. Salvation by rich, reigning grace, through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus. Nor is there salvation in any other. He is the hope of Israel, and the saviour thereof in the time of trouble. Be it known unto you therefore, men and brethren, that through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins.

Surely,



Surely, the lines are fallen to us in pleasant places, and we have a goodly heritage! God hath not dealt so with many nations, neither have the heathen the knowledge of his laws. This message is exactly suited to the circumstances of those to whom it is sent. A condemned criminal, and a free pardon—a lost sinner, and a free salvation! How must that soul rejoice who has the sentence of death in himself, to hear that Jesus receiveth sinners *freely*; and saves to the *very uttermost* all who come unto God by him! That his precious blood cleanseth from all sin; and that whosoever cometh to him shall in no wise be cast out. Here then is a sure foundation for a sinner to build upon. Here we may rely for pardon and salvation, without fear of a disappointment. None ever trusted in the Lord and were confounded. These truths are the christian's support and consolation; living and dying.—These truths you have often heard from the lips of our departed friend. It was his delight to assert the true and proper Divinity of the Person of Christ; to proclaim the freedom of his grace; the merit of his blood; and the almighty power of his arm—to exalt the Lord Jesus as the sinner's friend and only Saviour.

And I have to add that these truths were the support of his soul in his last moments.—I am

not at liberty to say much upon this subject; as it was the particular request of the deceased, that in his last illness he might not be disturbed by the kindly intended visits of his friends; that after his death his body might be privately conveyed to the silent grave; and very little be said in publick concerning him. In this instance he was not singular. The late eminent Mr. Toplady positively forbad *any* funeral sermon being preached upon his death. But, for the christian's encouragement, I may venture to observe, that Dr. Peckwell, upon his death-bed, expressed to a friend the satisfaction he had in having preached a free and full salvation to sinners by Jesus Christ. Here, said he, should our confidence be fixed; and here *alone* I fix *my confidence*. Thus the Gospel supports a soul in the trying hour of death; and enables it to rejoice in the prospect of approaching glory.

"Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord."

We observe, 2dly, that those who, with the heart, believe in the doctrine of the death and resurrection of Christ, although they sleep in the grave, shall be raised to a glorious immortality, at the second coming of the Son of God. I would not have you to be ignorant concerning them which are asleep. "Christ *died*—his people *sleep*." He died under the curse of the law and the wrath of  
 God.

God. *They*, being delivered from all condemnation, fall asleep in the arms of an everlasting friend. To die is gain. Frequently in scripture death is represented by sleep. "Many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake." "She is not dead but sleepeth." Stephen also fell asleep. Faith in Christ does not exempt from the death of the body; but over the believer the second death hath *no power*. The grave is the house appointed for all living. Our fathers, where are they? And the prophets, do they live for ever? They are all numbered amongst the dead. But though their bodies are consigned to the grave to be food for reptiles, yet they are not lost. They enter into peace; they rest in their beds.

From the resurrection of Christ we have the strongest argument to prove the resurrection of the body. For if we believe that Jesus died, and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him. Paul seemed to the Philosophers at Athens, a setter forth of strange Gods; because he preached unto them Jesus and the resurrection. But why should it be thought a thing incredible that God should raise the dead? By that mighty power whereby he is able even to subdue all things to himself, he can as easily raise the

B 2 body

1 Dan. xii. 2. Luke viii. 52.



body from the grave, as he could at first form it out of the dust of the earth.

The resurrection of Christ is a truth clearly revealed, and positively asserted. <sup>f</sup> Now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the first fruits of them that slept. <sup>g</sup> He was seen after his resurrection by all the apostles, and by above five hundred brethren at once. <sup>h</sup> And while his disciples looked stedfastly toward heaven, behold, he was taken up, and a cloud received him out of their sight. John beheld him in the midst of the throne of God, as a lamb that had been slain. Christ rose as the first fruits of his people. Not as a private person, but as the head of his body the church; who is the beginning, the first born from the dead; that in all things he might have the pre-eminence. Now if Christ be risen as the first-fruits, and the head of the body, it follows, that *they must* rise also, or his body would not be complete. Where the head is, there must the members be. The union subsisting between him and his people, is not destroyed by death. Because he lives, they shall live also. “<sup>i</sup> And whosoever liveth and believeth in him shall never die.” He is gone to prepare a place for them, and has promised to come again and receive them to himself, that

<sup>f</sup> 1 Cor. xv. 20.

<sup>g</sup> Acts i. 9.

<sup>h</sup> Rev. v. vi.

<sup>i</sup> John xiv. 3.



that, "where he is they may be also." This is the father's will which hath sent him, that of all which he hath given him he should lose nothing, but raise it up again at the last day.

*Virtually* his people *are* raised up together, and made to sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus. He took the human nature up into heaven with him, and sends down his Spirit from heaven to dwell in his people, as the earnest of their inheritance, until the purchased possession shall be redeemed from the grave by the power of God. The resurrection from the grave is called the redemption of the body<sup>1</sup>. The christian looks forward with delight, knowing that his redemption draweth nigh. By faith he sees the heavens opened, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God. With an hope full of immortality he desires to depart and be with Christ. Confessing himself a stranger and pilgrim upon earth, he seeks a better, that is, an heavenly country. He lives above the world, possesses much of heaven, enjoys fellowship with the Father, and with his son Jesus Christ; he walks humbly with God in the exercise of faith and love; and his delight is to do his will. Made free by the Son of God, he has peace in his own conscience, power over sin, and strength to resist the temptations

<sup>2</sup> John vi. 39,

<sup>1</sup> Rom. viii. 33.

tations of the devil. Happy in the favor of his God, he chearfully submits to his authority, acquiesces in his dispensations, and says concerning all the work of his hands, *It is well.* His present afflictions, though grievous, work for him a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory. Thus by crosses, as well as comforts, he is brought nearer to God, and made meet for heaven. He is patient in tribulation, enduring as seeing him who is invisible, and lives in hope of eternal life, which God, who cannot lie, hath promised before the world began. And while a philosopher looks into the grave with composure, the christian looks beyond the grave with transport. He views death as a conquered enemy, disarmed of all his terror; and exults in the apostles words, O death! where is thy sting? O grave! where is thy victory? The promises, faithfulness, and power of God support him, so that with the Patriarch, he willingly gives up the Ghost; or with dying Stephen cries, Lord Jesus receive my spirit.

Thus did our dear departed friend resign his spirit into the Lord's hand; and with his last words, about an hour and half before his death, pronounced a blessing on the partner of his life.

But we sorrow not as those who have no hope; for them also who sleep in Jesus will  
God

God bring with him. The same Jesus who was taken up into heaven, shall so come in like manner as he was seen go up into heaven. He shall come in his own glory, and in the glory of his Father, with all the holy angels. The Lord himself shall descend with a shout, with the voice of the arch-angel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first. Then they which are alive and remain, shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air. Thus shall death be swallowed up in victory. The body, sown in dishonour, shall be raised in glory. It shall be fashioned like unto Christ's glorious body. When he shall appear we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is. Happy art thou O Israel! who is like unto thee, O people, saved by the Lord!

We observe 3dly, That the consideration of the happiness to which the saints, who sleep in Jesus, are admitted, is a sovereign antidote to surviving friends against excessive sorrow.

Heathens, who had no knowledge of the resurrection, or a future state, used to make bald their heads, cut their flesh, and make the most hideous lamentations over their dead. But the gospel teaches us different sentiments; yea the word of God expressly forbids such conduct



conduct. "m Ye shall not cut yourselves; nor make any baldness between your eyes, for the dead." Religion does not destroy natural affection, or make us Stoicks; but it mitigates our sorrow for the dead. We may weep, but we must not murmur. Our Lord manifested the purest friendship, and most tender sympathy, when he wept at the grave of Lazarus. The Jews said, Behold, how he loved him! When a friend, a brother, a minister is taken from us, nature, yea *religion*, teaches us to shed a friendly tear. But our grief must be moderate, not excessive. We should not sorrow as those who have no hope. We this day bewail the loss of an able minister of the gospel. He is not dead but sleepeth. He has fought a good fight, finished his course, kept the faith, and is now entered into the joy of his Lord. There he possesses all his soul wished for; beholding face to face the unveiled glory of that Jesus, whose gospel, while upon earth, he preached, whose cause he pleaded, whose doctrine he defended.

All the grand designs of providence concerning him are accomplished, as to his own salvation; and all the work intended to be done by him, in promoting the salvation of others. With a never-fading crown of righteousness



ousness on his head, and a palm of victory in his hand, he is now constantly employed in ascribing to the Redeemer the glory of his salvation.

Better are the dead that are already dead than the living that are still alive. This consideration, therefore, should conciliate our minds to the present loss, and lead us to say, "The will of the Lord be done." But those of you to whom his ministry has been particularly useful, are now ready to conclude that your comforts are all buried in his grave, and that you shall henceforth be strangers to spiritual joy. Remember that although your shepherd is taken from you, the great Shepherd of Israel has promised never to leave, nor forsake you. He will give you pastors according to his own heart, who shall feed you with knowledge, and understanding. Upon him therefore cast your care, and pray the Lord of the harvest to send forth laborers into his harvest.

The poor bemoan the loss of a patron and benefactor; especially, considering the relation in which he stood to the charity called, *The Sick Man's Friend*, which he established, and labored to support. But still Jesus is the sick man's friend. *He* healeth all manner of sickness, and all manner of disease among  
C the

the people. He regardeth the necessities of the poor and needy; and will withhold no manner of thing that is good. He healeth the broken in heart, and bindeth up their wounds.

Another consideration which should reconcile us to present trials, and afflictive dispensations is, *God is a Sovereign*, and has an undoubted right to do as he pleases. "Behold he taketh away, who can hinder him? Who will say unto him, "What dost thou?" "Why dost thou strive against him? for he giveth not account of any of his matters. Clouds and darkness are round about him, as to the dispensations of his providence; but righteousness and judgment are the stability of his throne. "God moves in a mysterious way, his wonders to perform." His counsel shall stand. What we know not now we shall know hereafter. It is for us, therefore, to be still, and know that he is God. In an hour that we think not, the Son of Man frequently cometh. Of this we have had a very recent proof in the death of our dear friend. In the meridian of life and usefulness, after a very short illness, he was cut down. The immediate cause of his dissolution, which you are in general acquainted with, was so singular, as to lead

<sup>n</sup> Job ix. 12.

<sup>\*</sup> Job xxxiii. 13.

us to say, " This must be the Lord's doing\*." On the day he received the fatal messenger, we made several appointments together, little expecting so speedy a separation. How unsearchable are the Lord's judgments, and his ways past finding out! But a God of infinite wisdom cannot err, nor a God of unchanging love act unkindly.

Lastly, let us remember we shall soon meet all our brethren, and companions in tribulation, and in the kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ, who are gone before, never more to be separated from each other. We shall go to our departed friend, but he shall not return to us. " We shall sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven. God has provided some better things for us, that they without us should not be made perfect. Jesus says, " Lo! I come quickly. Blessed is that servant, whom his Lord, when he cometh, shall find so doing."—Matt. xxiv. 46.

Permit me now to call upon you all to attend to the voice of God in this awful providence.

\* Dr. PECKWELL opened the body of a young person who died of a consumption, whose lungs were in a very diseased state, and the chest full of putrid matter; and in sewing up this body, gave himself a wound with the needle; which proved fatal on the tenth day.



It is appointed to all men once to die. Examine yourselves, therefore, as to the foundation upon which you build your hopes of future happiness; and whether you have that faith, in the Son of God, which is the operation of his Spirit; which overcomes the world, purifies the heart, works by love, and is essential to salvation. He that believeth not is condemned already. Many of you are far advanced in life; there is but a step between you and death. Have you a well grounded hope of eternal life, by the resurrection of Christ from the dead? It is not sufficient that you have a form of godliness, unless you know the power thereof. Ye must be born again. Many have a name to live but are dead. The hope of the hypocrite shall perish; fearfulness shall soon surprize him. Perhaps, by habit, you are grown secure in sin, and totally neglect this great salvation. You have been often warned of your danger, by one who will never warn you more. If you perish your blood will be upon yourselves. It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God. What will become of you, when the Lord shall be revealed from heaven, in flaming fire, to take vengeance on them who know not God, and obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ? The wicked shall then be turned into Hell;  
and

and all the nations that forget God. Better had it been for you that you had never been born, than that you should die in your sins. Though hand join in hand the wicked shall not go unpunished. The sinner dying an hundred years old is accursed. Sooner or later your sin shall find you out. And he that being often reproved, hardneth his neck, shall suddenly perish, and that without remedy.—You who are in the prime of life, may take warning, from this instance of mortality, not to presume upon years to come. You know not what a day may bring forth! Prepare to meet your God! Bodily strength is no security against the approach of death. Perhaps you are now following the pleasures and vanities of life, and thinking, to-morrow shall be as this day, and much more abundant. You slight the gospel, and make a mock at sin. Dreadful state! The wicked is frequently driven away in the midst of his wickedness. This night and your souls may be required of you! How will you meet the judge of quick and dead, who shall render to every man according to his works? Who will pour out the vials of his wrath, without mixture, upon every stubborn and impenitent sinner?

Let the young remember their Creator in the days of their youth, while the evil days  
come

come not, nor the years draw nigh when they shall say, I have no pleasure in them.

You who are happy in the good ways of God, and enjoy the light of his countenance, consider this providence as a call to watchfulness. Be ye also ready. Your hearts sunk within you when you heard the doleful news of your minister's death. Improve the solemn event. The Lord's eye is upon you. Guard against formality, and lukewarmness. Manifest your love to the Lord Jesus, by your zeal to promote his glory. <sup>P</sup>Whatsoever your hands find to do, do it with all your might; for there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom in the grave, whither you are going; therefore, Be fervent in spirit serving the Lord. Let it be your study to maintain constant communion with God; that whenever he shall call you hence, you may depart in peace, fall asleep in Jesus, and be for ever with the Lord. Let us comfort one another with these words.

<sup>P</sup> Eccles. ix. 10.



F I N I S.



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